


TRANSCRIPT OF NBC TODAY SHOW NEWS ITEM ON PELTON CASE
(Monday, 19 May 1986)

ANNOUNCER: In this country jury selection begins today in one of the most important espionage trials in years. James Polk has this report.

 POLK: In the National Security Agency's super secret world of electronic spying and eavesdropping on the Soviet union, no ex-employee may ever have done greater damage than Ronald Pelton in selling secrets to the Russian KGB. A man described as a brilliant but broke, Pelton is accused of telephoning the Soviet embassy in 1980, a phone conversation wiretapped by the FBI who never knew who the caller was until the KGB agent on the other end of the line--flipflop defector Vitaly Yurchenko--tipped them off five years later.

Meanwhile, prosecutors say Pelton flew twice to Vienna, Austria, staying inside the Soviet ambassador's private residence, telling the KGB what he knew.

Pelton apparently gave away one of the National Security Agency's most sensitive secrets--a project with the codename IVY BELLS, believed to be a top secret underwater eavesdropping operation by American submarines inside Russian harbors. If convicted, Pelton will face life in prison. His trial should last about one and one-half weeks. James Polk, NBC News, Baltimore.